

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A process for making a highly durable, hydroentangled nonwoven fabric, comprising the steps of;
 - a) providing a fibrous matrix comprising a blend of thermoplastic fusible fibers and base fibers,
 - b) consolidating the fibrous blend into a precursor web,
 - c) hydroentangling the precursor web into a nonwoven fabric using a three-dimensional image transfer device, the three-dimensional image transfer device imparting the fibrous matrix with a three-dimensional spatial arrangement,
 - d) elevating the temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric such that said fusible fiber bind the fibrous blend together, thus securing the three-dimensional spatial arrangement of the fibrous matrix.
2. A process according to claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic fusible fiber has a melt temperature less than the melt temperature or the decomposition temperature of the base fiber.
3. A process according to claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic fusible fiber is selected from the group consisting of polyamide homopolymers, polyamide co-polymers, polyamide derivatized polymers and combinations thereof.
4. A process according to claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic fusible fiber is selected from the group consisting of polyesters homopolymers, polyester co-polymers, polyester derivatized polymers and combinations thereof.
5. A process according to claim 1 wherein the base fiber is selected from the group consisting of natural fibers, thermoplastic fibers, thermoset fibers, and the combinations thereof.
6. A process according to claim 5, wherein the thermoplastic fiber is polyester.
7. A process according to claim 5, wherein the natural fiber is rayon.
8. A process according to claim 1, wherein the means for elevating temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric is by heated air.

9. A process according to claim 1, wherein the means for elevating temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric is by heated surface contact.

10. A process for making a highly durable, hydroentangled nonwoven fabric, comprising the steps of;

5 a) providing a first fibrous matrix comprising a blend of thermoplastic fusible fibers and base fibers,

b) providing a second fibrous matrix comprising a blend of thermoplastic fusible fibers and base fibers,

10 c) layering one or more first fibrous matrices with one or more second fibrous matrices,

d) consolidating the layered fibrous matrices into a precursor web,

15 e) hydroentangling the precursor web into a nonwoven fabric using a three-dimensional image transfer device, the three-dimensional image transfer device imparting the layered fibrous matrices into a three-dimensional spatial arrangement,

f) elevating the temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric such that said fusible fibers bind the fibrous blend together, thus securing the three-dimensional spatial arrangement of the fibrous matrices.

20 11. A highly durable, hydroentangled nonwoven fabric, comprising a blend of fusible fiber and base fiber consolidated into a precursor web, the precursor web being hydroentangled on a three-dimensional image transfer device to impart the fusible fiber and base fiber with a specific spatial arrangement, the imaged nonwoven fabric then being subjected to elevated temperature to secure the three-dimensional spatial arrangement.

25 12. A fabric according to claim 11 wherein the elevated temperature treated imaged nonwoven fabric is dyed by conventional woven textile processes.

13. A fabric according to claim 12 wherein the conventional woven textile dyeing process is jet-dyeing.

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